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The United States : Bush, Iraq and reelection

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A CONCLUSION ON THE RECALL ELECTION

Of course, you have heard of the California Recall election, held on October 7, and won by Arnold Schwartzenegger, who has *thus* become the new (Republican) governor of California. He won with a 48 % result, whereas his major (Democrat) challenger, Mr Cruz Bustamamante got a 32 % result ; the third « serious » candidate, Mr Tom McClintock, a conservative Republican got 13%. (Mr Schwartzenegger is seen as a « moderate » Republican ; he supports abortion and gay rights).

I would like to warn you against the mistakes often made by students on this topic. You cannot satisfy yourself with the hasty (= too rapid) judgements produced in France about this « Hollywood election ». This is too superficial.
First of all, there has been a precedent. Ronald Reagan was only known as an actor, and not even a successful one, when he was elected Governor of California. Hen then became president of the US.
I would rather focus, not on the incompetence of Arnie (see last month's press review), but on **the danger a recall election represents** : what if every time someone was democratically elected, such a recall election was launched against him ? What about the stability in the political life ? What about giving politicians some time to do the job ? What if political opponents start using this recall possibility all the time ?

Elections in the US are already too close to one another, some *contend*[1]. *Indeed*, Congressmen are only elected for two years. As for the president, he faces the mid-terms two years after coming into office, and reelection two years after the latter.
American politicians are forever campaigning and trying to gather money for their next election, they are reluctant to take unpopular measures and rather try to please pressure groups (lobbies). These are major **flaws**[2] in the American political system, and the recall election has not lifted any of these worries.

BEFORE YOU READ

[1] to contend : être d'avis que

[2] a flaw : un défaut

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Speaking of election or reelection, the two selected texts display an accurate appraisal of George W. Bush's term so far and the challenges he faces in his country.

Like Tony Blair, he has to *deal with* **the aftermath of the war in Iraq**, the unhappiness of Americans for the money spent, the soldiers killed, the failure to actually find Bin Laden or prove Iraq was a real threat to the US.

Moreover, he has to take into account the fact that **he will face reelection or dismissal next November**. In the US, the presidential elelction has already started : indeed, the future candidates are already campaigning for the Primaries. On the Republican side, Bush is likely to be the official –and only- candidate. On the Democratic side, however, many candidates are trying to gain the official endorsement form the party. Primaries are held in the spring (all citizens may participate, it depends on the state), and Party Convention meet in the summer to name the official candidate (or rather « ticket », as a president and vice-president run together).

Though he is the only Republican candidate *so far*, does Bush have good chances to be reelected. *The Economist* answers with conditions. These two texts are about 1/ the aftermath of Iraq and the concept of America as an « empire » 2/ Bush's challenges for reelection.

TEXT Show me the way to go home

Aug 14th 2003 , *The Economist*

EMPIRES are born in funny ways, and sometimes, via the law of unintended consequences, by accident. In his 1998 declaration of war against "Jews and Crusaders", Osama bin Laden said his aim was to force America's armies to depart "shattered and broken-winged from all the lands of Islam". *So far* he has achieved the opposite. Within less than two years of the felling of the twin towers, America has invaded and occupied two Muslim countries, Afghanistan and Iraq, with a combined population of more than 50m. If this has surprised Mr bin Laden, it may be no less of a surprise to America itself. **Who expected the colony that started its own national life by casting off the empire of George III to end up running a far-flung Muslim Dominion of Iraqistan[3]?**[4]

However it happened, Americans are not enjoying it much. **The Afghan war of 2001 and the Iraq war this spring were walkovers, costing between them a grand total of fewer than 150 American lives**. For the superpower, if not its adversaries,

[3] The word « Iraqistan » was invented by the journalist as a symbol of the US action both in Afghanistan and Iraq in the wake of the terror attacks in New York.

[4] The paradox indeed is that America gained independence from Britain because it refused to be dominated as a « colony » within the British Empire : America is now the one with an imperialistic stance, the journalist suggests. Do you agree ? You must think about this recurrent notion of « imperialism » about America and decide whether you agree or not AND find further examples to illustrate your point of view (this is the exact work you are expected to do in your essays and « colles »)

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